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iSpot: a citizen science platform for inclusive learning and teaching

Conference or Workshop Item

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Introduction

The Open University launched the citizen science platform www.iSpotnature.org (iSpot) in 2009. iSpot uses the challenge of identifying nature to engage people as citizen scientists; encouraging learning about wildlife while building species identification skills. It provides a multifaceted experience, incorporating participatory science research with e-learning opportunities. The website hosts an active online community of thousands of expert and novice users who support each other in answering identification questions.

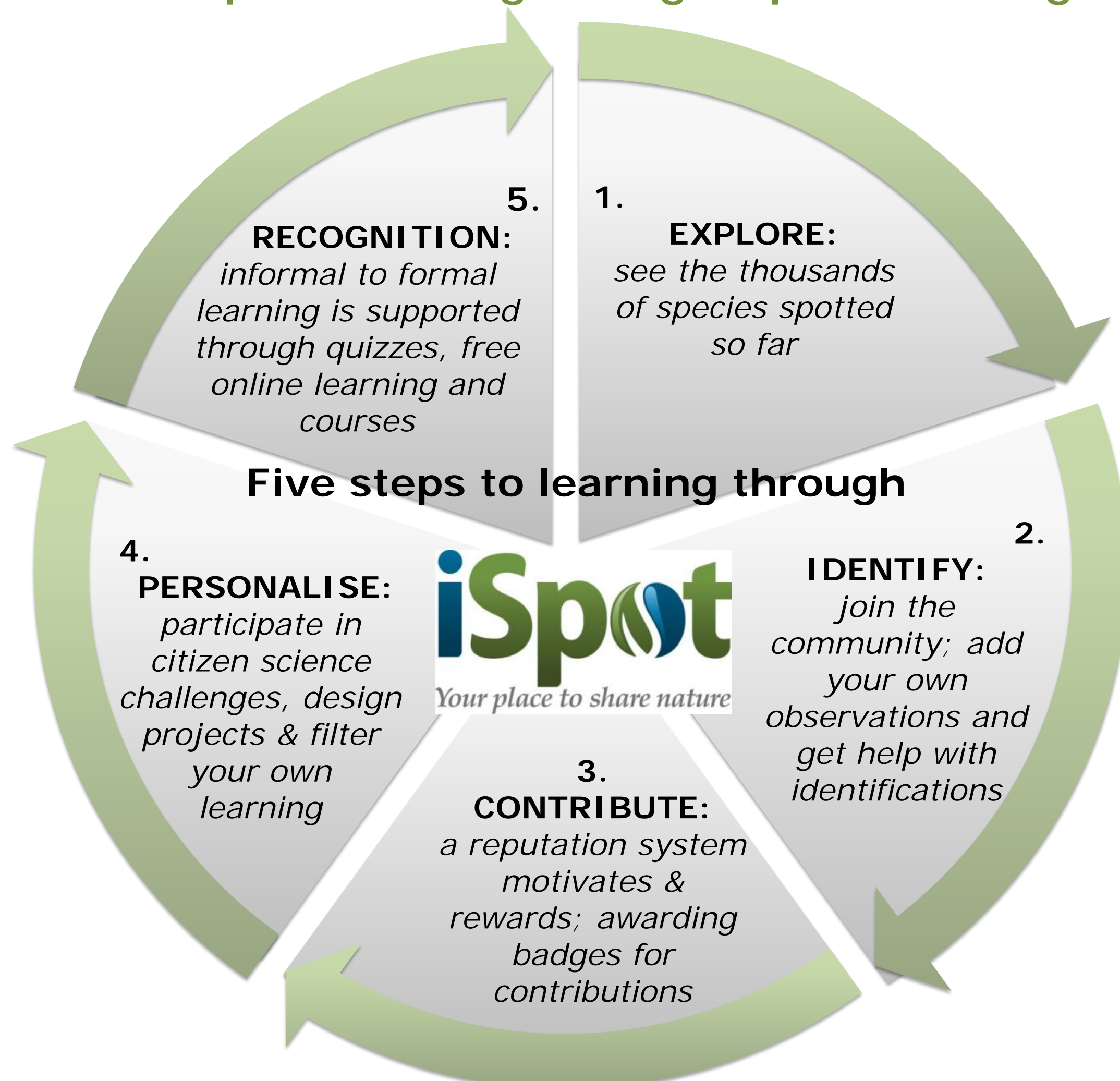
Learning was always part of the design, incorporating innovative educational technology-based tools and features, along with activities which encourage public participation and engagement that help to facilitate teaching; creating a unique learning journey¹.

We are launching a new free course **Citizen science and global biodiversity**, which supports a pathway between informal, non-formal to formal learning. This is based on a five-step model which demonstrates that, through a citizen science platform environment, authentic inquiry facilitates learning.

Exploring nature with iSpot



Five steps to learning through iSpotnature.org



This model promotes a view that, in addition to the value of the data from citizen scientists, an inquiry process and how learning is supported are key. The methodology centres on a learning design, supported by iSpot, leading from exploration of nature through to recognised learning actions.¹

Citizen science and global biodiversity – a new badged open course (BOC)²

Taking the theme of global biodiversity, the course considers how citizen science facilitates public involvement in scientific research while building individual skills. Online recording is demonstrated through practical activities using the iSpot platform. Once a species is identified, web resources can be used to research its ecology. Case studies explore the impact of citizen scientists on biodiversity recording around the globe.

Eight weeks of study

1. What is citizen science?
2. Global biodiversity
3. Using biological keys for species identification
4. Biodiversity recording
5. Advanced techniques for species identification
6. Using web resources
7. Learning with iSpot: joining an online community
8. Citizen science and biodiversity recording around the globe.

Would you like to help us?

We are seeking external partners, involved in citizen science, to contribute to an extra study week in their own area of expertise, which would be added to the 8 weeks of study for this BOC. Interested? For more information or to get involved contact us.

Contact

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References

¹ Ansine, J., Dodd, M., Robinson, D., McAndrew, P., (2017) **Exploring citizen science and inquiry learning through iSpotnature.org**. Chapter 6 in Herodotou, C., Sharples, M., Scanlon, E. (eds) **Citizen Inquiry: Synthesising citizen science and inquiry learning**. Routledge. (<https://www.routledge.com/Citizen-Inquiry-Synthesising-Science-and-Inquiry-Learning/Herodotou-Sharples-Scanlon/p/book/9781138208698>)

² OpenLearn: <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/get-started/badges-come-openlearn>